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[Speaker 1] (3:36 - 46:00)

So the dance continues, phenomenal existence, nothing stays in place for that long and that is a beautiful tool, the continuous change, continuous ending and beginning and ending and beginning experiences. Without looking for yourself in all that, in the dance of phenomenal existence, then it gets difficult. And the essence of our weekend retreat really is the essence of existence.

And that's by knowing yourself as the awareness in which phenomenal existence happens, become free of dependency on phenomena and free of self-seeking in situations, places, conditions, looking for a deeper me, a bigger me in phenomena, fearing change because I may lose something that I thought was part of me. Then phenomenal existence, people may pretend that they're having fun, but they're not really. It's a continuously enticing thing and also a threatening thing to be in phenomenal existence and not knowing yourself.

Only knowing yourself as a phenomenon in the head, so the freedom is simply knowing yourself as the aware space and then let it happen. And you even participate in it, you're not just a passive spectator, although that element is always there even as you act upon, as this form acts upon the world and participates in the dance, you're not just watching the dance of other life forms, you're also, there is a form, temporary form here that participates in the dance also. So you dance along, but you watch that also, you watch yourself dancing the dance of phenomenal existence.

And it's fine. Now the wonderful thing that happens when you know yourself as the awareness, you no longer demand that phenomenal existence should make you happy. Because everybody otherwise is demanding that, you don't know yourself, you demand something from the world, the world owes me, it should make me happy.

I've given so much, what has the world given me? And of course the world won't do that. But phenomena are not designed to make people happy.

To give the appearance of happiness for moments, yes, and then the tendency is to turn to either end or to turn into the opposite. That's in the nature of phenomena. They quickly come to an end, or if they continue, their satisfying nature is no longer satisfying.

And it's an amazing thing when the demand is dropped that the world should make you happy. And what does the world, the world means phenomena, the world means a place should make you happy. I found the place, the ideal place to live, I'm really going to be happy there.

People, this one, I found the one who is going to make me happy. Conditions, situations, anything phenomenal, expecting ultimate fulfillment, it cannot live up to that, the world cannot live up to that. And expecting to complete yourself, to find a sense of completion in phenomena also, it cannot, the world cannot give you that sense of completion and fulfillment.

So in the absence of knowing yourself, no space consciousness, as we could call it, presence, awareness, off-awareness, self-aware, then it's a struggle. And ultimately it's frustration. And you no longer demand that the world should make you happy, phenomena, experiences, the reactive relationship towards experiences goes, reactive personalized relationship towards everything that happens around you.

You may even get angry about the weather not being as it should be. It's a tiny thing, but it's just one of many things that people are reactive about. And then you may seek the ideal climate, and when you finally get there, something else happens to spoil the whole thing.

There's always something that comes in, in any condition, place, or situation, an element sooner or later comes in that is, seems to, a little thing that seems to spoil it. Something wants to come in it, to detract from the, that was so nice for a moment, and then a flaw comes in, and that is in the nature of phenomena, the little thing comes in, it's not quite working as it should, that wasn't in the plan. And when you see it, it's never quite perfect, the phenomenal world.

It's not, it's never, as long as you expect it to be perfect, just right, it's not. When you give up the demand or the expectation that a situation, a person, or a relationship should make you happy, should display perfection, should give you a sense of self, then it won't. If you drop the demand, then the strange thing is, it is quite a perfect place.

You don't need it to be perfect anymore, the imperfection inherent in all phenomena, which means they come to an end, they continuously change, is actually part of the dance. And quite beautiful too, that's expressed in Zen. A Zen master was sweeping the floor, and he knocked over, with a broom, with a handle behind him, there was a vase on the table, and he knocked it over by mistake.

And the disciple saw that, and the disciple, with a slight smile on his face, asked the master, is perfection possible in this, for a human being? And the master said, yes, the perfect human being allows imperfection to be there. So it's not really imperfection, it's the nature accepting the nature of phenomena.

But it's interesting to see, no matter what you do and where you go, something will come in, and it seems there's a little element there that wants to spoil it. But it's not really. When you no longer demand anything, there's simply the acceptance of the continuously fluctuating dance, then that is fine too.

So now what we are really talking about is the state of aligning yourself with the is-ness of this moment, which is the dance, not demand that it should be different. When is the world going to make me happy? Nothing can make you happy for long, but when you know yourself, there's an abiding, alive sense of peace.

We could call it joy, just because there's such aliveness there. Peace coupled with aliveness really is joy. Joy is an alive sense of peace.

That is the joy of being, of being who you are. And it is there continuously as the undercurrent. That is the joy of knowing yourself as the very life essence before phenomena, the very awareness.

That knowledge is joy. And you then enjoy both the birth and the death of phenomena, which happens continuously. The end of this retreat is a kind of death of a particular experience, and you enjoy that.

But if you only have this experience, you might get sad about leaving this place, because the experience comes to an end. And then you project yourself, oh, in two days I'll be there, back. And you miss the here.

So there's that which doesn't end, being, the awareness, and knowing yourself as that. And then things happen. And you participate.

And in the background, there's a witnessing presence, and you watch yourself talking and doing. Sometimes you watch emotions. The Buddha saw all that already.

He said, no matter where you go or what you do, whatever condition you find, whatever situation you find yourself in, he said, it will have three characteristics. Any situation, any condition, and they are expressed in the Pali language, which is a kind of similar to Sanskrit. Anicca, anatta, and dukkha.

I don't use foreign words very often, but it's nice to see the truth expressed everywhere. Anicca means impermanent, it passes. Any condition, wherever you go, it has the characteristic of impermanency.

Anicca means impermanent, passing, fleeting. And the strange thing is, even yesterday, it's gone. Last week, it's gone.

Your childhood is gone. Not very different from a dream, because the forms are there for a while, and then they dissolve like mist or vapor. Was it all a dream?

And sometimes it happens, even to people, they look back on something, just, was that a dream or did it happen? It may even be to you when you're traveling back to your usual way you live, and suddenly the Holioik experience recedes, and then suddenly you're back in your old familiar surroundings, and you, okay, was that a dream, the whole

Holiok thing? No, it was real, but it's gone just as if it were a dream.

And so this is, all sensory experience has that nature of anicca, and it evaporates, and it's amazing, and it's a fearful thing when you have to hang on to these things, because you're looking for yourself in it somewhere. Oh, it's coming to an end again. Or a relationship can be devastating, a relationship coming to an end again.

As a friend of mine once told me when she had a relationship, and it came to an end, and she said goodbye to him on the train, the relationship, of course, finished, and she said, God, this time you've gone too far. And that is another, people have that, they have an issue with God. You shouldn't, you should know better.

Phenomena shouldn't come to an end. Why did you arrange things in that way? Everything should last forever and be completely static.

So that's the truth of impermanence. And if you expect the impermanent to be permanent, that is the other characteristic of all phenomena, of all situations, conditions, that the Buddha called dukkha, suffering. If you expect the impermanent to be permanent, it's the suffering, dukkha, dukkha.

And the element of suffering then is the unsatisfactoriness that comes in because of the transient nature of phenomena. Dukkha can also be translated as plain misery, unsatisfactoriness, suffering. And the third characteristic, and again, we've already been talking about it, anatta, every situation, every condition, not self.

It is not self. And if you're seeking yourself in it, again, you're back in dukkha, suffering. Anatta, not self.

Whatever situation you're in, if there's self-seeking, an enhanced seeking, an enhanced sense of me through identification with this or that, you're back in suffering. So every condition, every situation has those characteristics. There's no self in it, it is impermanent, and if you don't know it, it's suffering.

And once, this is the truth uttered, he may have been the first human being who saw the truth 2,600 years ago. Wow. And that simplicity then, over the centuries, became a huge religion.

And you have to study years to get it. It is possible that he also taught body awareness. Some people say he did, it doesn't matter.

Vipassana is a body awareness meditation in Buddhism, to feel, be in the body. So Jesus recognized it, the impermanence. That is the realm, the dimension, where moth and rust consume and thieves break in and steal.

So he said, that he described the dimension of phenomena. Moth and rust. Now rust

does, it consumes even the hardest of form, metal.

Moth, they are these little things that eat garments, so they, it consumes, it's a nice visual image of impermanence of form. So if you put your attention on form and seek forms, then you, it crumbles. You can see the crumbling.

And thieves break in and steal forms, get taken away by thieves or by life, by God, who shouldn't have. It would be amazing if you could see the world of form, speed it up, as you see in some films, when they speed up the film and you see our flower, this is the bud of a flower, and then it opens. First it comes out of the ground, but flower opens, and then it withers, and it's gone.

And if you saw a human being, you would see something similar. And the human form withers just like an apple that is an apple, and then it's fresh at first, and then it gets wrinkled. Now another amazing thing, if you saw, I saw, I looked at flowers, a flower bed, and I saw this, how these forms, how they come out of the ground and go, the flowers come, open up and go, and then the next ones come.

So it's a continuous, back into nothingness, and really the same flower is coming up again, into existence, out of existence, into existence, out of existence. Humans, I see, I was driving, I don't even remember what city it was, back from the city to the airport, and the whole city is full of people running around. And on the way to the airport there was a huge cemetery, and a few years ago they were all running around the city, and it was so important.

And I also love to look at old photographs that you can buy in antique junk shops, where people, they found photographs in their attic or somewhere, and can't even remember who they were, and so they end up in a shop, and you see all these people, long gone. Not much is remembered, and they were trapped in their world of problems that were so important, and how quickly forms dissolve. Look at a city scene in a photograph, hundreds of people cheering a political leader or something, and everybody's gone.

The political leader and the cheering people evaporated. And it was so important, total, and here we come to the relative importance of all things in phenomena. I'm not saying pay no attention anymore to the world of phenomena, no, honor it, but know that whatever is here in the world is relatively important, but not absolutely important.

The only thing of absolute importance is knowing who you are beyond phenomenal existence. Jesus said that you're concerned about many things, but really only one thing matters. He said to Martha, only one thing matters, ultimately matters.

So to honor the phenomenal world, but not believing that it is so serious. It's not that serious, not that heavy. And there's something very strange when you contemplate the impermanence of everything and just see it.

Don't even need to think about it or formulate a theory or whatever, to just see the impermanence of all forms. And when you stay with that, it is one way of knowing yourself beyond form, because that which sees the impermanence is the awareness. And that's in Buddhism, sometimes they have the practice of contemplating dead bodies.

The monks go and look at dead bodies in the morgue and sit there for two or three hours or a whole day. That's maybe taking it to an extreme, and besides, in the Western world, they wouldn't even allow you to do that. They think you must be weird if you want to see a dead body.

It's not allowed. You have to get special permission, and you probably wouldn't get it. So to see the impermanence, whether in the human form or any other form, you might think that must be depressing.

But if you stay simply with the seeing of it, without coming to any conclusion, you don't need to draw any mental conclusion that, oh, this is dreadful, this is whatever, or even a theory, of course, even to take refuge in a mental theory that, yeah, but reincarnation, one reincarnates into the next. We leave that aside to something more essential. Reincarnation doesn't help you if in your next reincarnation you still don't know who you are.

Simply to see the impermanence, the seeing is freeing. The seeing of it, because that is the awareness. So there is something very strangely peaceful about seeing the impermanence of all forms.

And that is because the awareness sees that. And that is the one thing or no thing that is not subject to birth and death. It is the universal awareness going through this form, moving through this form.

But it is the universal consciousness, the one not subject to birth and death. It sees. And that is why I mentioned that also at some point.

There is something sacred about the fact of death, the disappearing forms. Because whenever the form disappears momentarily, something shines through at that moment of transition, of disappearance. From form into no form, the formless shines through.

And that is the joy of being here also. Because it is a kind of psychological death that you voluntarily embrace here. Who you thought you were dies.

Not that the form disappears. But the belief that this is me, that me goes. Your sense of who you are dies.

And that is beautiful. And suddenly you see how you had limited yourself in an absurd way to a little me and my problems. So one could say it is simply a shift from believing that I am this, or I am that, and I want to be that, to simply go deeper.

I am. To know yourself as the I am presence, which is awareness. Twice in the Bible that occurs, and those are the most profound statements in the Old Testament, when they ask about God, who are you?

What is your name? And God, the one consciousness, speaking of course through a human, somebody wrote that, says, I am that I am. I am that I am.

That's what God says about him, her, itself. I am that I am. The I am, that's the I am.

The innermost identity of each form. So that, everybody senses there's something incredibly precious in me that I don't want to lose when I die. And they mix that up with form in the head.

My story, my life, my identity, that feels so precious. So that gets mixed up with objects in consciousness, not realizing that that preciousness that you sense, if only in an obscure way, those people who haven't realized who they are in the background, they said preciousness, but they believe it's to do with the object in consciousness, the forms, not knowing that this preciousness is their own essence, which is consciousness itself. And this they don't want to lose.

And it's the only thing they can't lose. So the innermost identity, something remained. You were a child, then you grew up, and perhaps your life changed dramatically, almost as if you had gone through different incarnations in one lifetime.

It happens to some people. Other people remain in one incarnation. They stay in the same place, perhaps into the same job, a whole lifetime.

Who knows? That could be how they realize, through sheer boredom, finally. But many people move through, their form seems to change so dramatically.

Suddenly your form is so different in relation to the world. Even with me, this form, it happened. This form was a hermit for years.

Nobody paid much attention except a few people here and there to what the hermit said. And basically it was wonderful being nobody, beautiful. And then suddenly the nobody becomes somebody in the eyes of the world, like a new incarnation.

And nothing has changed in the innermost, absolutely nothing. But externally it looks, oh, there's a new incarnation now. But if you look deep underneath the events and the phenomena, the innermost, the essence of your being is the same.

Deep down, the sense of I-ness underneath the changing phenomena around you is the same. And that is the I am. That is the awareness, the consciousness.

People don't know that. They sometimes get glimpses of that and then it gets mixed up again with the objects that arise in consciousness. So knowing yourself not as arising

objects in consciousness, as phenomenal experience or thoughts, but that which makes all that possible.

This is expressed so beautifully in a very ancient scripture, in one of the Upanishads, some of which are even earlier than the Bhagavad Gita, a very ancient Indian scripture, talking about the nature of God or the ultimate or the eternal or the one. And that's what it says is this. I only remember a few lines, not the whole of it.

Not that which the eye sees, but that whereby the eye can see. Know that alone to be Brahman, the eternal, and not what people here adore. Not that which the ear hears, but that whereby the ear can hear.

Know that alone to be Brahman, the eternal, and not what people here adore. Not that which the mind thinks, but that whereby the mind can think. Know that alone to be Brahman, the eternal, and not what people here adore.

That, the one, the underlying consciousness that makes thought possible, thought comes out of it, that makes sense perception possible, the very ground, that not what people here adore. What people here adore is mental images of God, or they make God some external object that they believe will give them salvation, and then they make that into God. Not what people here adore.

That's beautiful. That's the essence. So, I'd like to listen to one more song before we go on to exchanging hugs, if we haven't done that yet.

And just listen, the song is again by Kirtana, and it is called, appropriately, I Am.

[Speaker 2] (46:47 - 52:32)

I Am I am part of everything I see Behind the eyes, beyond the skies, reflecting me At the silent core, and yet before a phenomenon begins Born after it, and after it, I am Many differences separate us on the surface, yes But I cannot find a boundary in consciousness When you ask me, where does awareness begin and does it end? I have to say, I have to say, I've always been Within the body, without the body, not subject to Changing moods, states of health, points of view Without needs, before the deeds and the monuments of man Born after it, and after it, I am Many differences separate us on the surface, yes But I cannot find a boundary in consciousness When you ask me, where does awareness begin and does it end? I have to say, I have to say, I've always been At the silent core, and yet before a phenomenon begins Born after it, and after it, I am No more words are coming, so no more words are needed.

[Speaker 1] (52:36 - 52:37)

Thank you.